

# AMERICAN THEATRE

NOVEMBER 2013 THEATRE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

## ■ DALLAS



Thomas Riccio

### THE LAST SHOW THE ENSEMBLE

*Dead White Zombies* performed was in a rundown house in West Dallas notorious for alleged narcotics dealing. That show was a provocative, site-specific piece about African-American identity, with an absurdist bent. Starting Nov. 7 in an open run, the *Zombies* move a few blocks down the road into a former bus garage to open *Bull Game* (*winner loses action figures*), a piece about

## TRAINING DAY IN BIG D

American entertainment, competition and ritual told through the lens of sports.

This is the fifth show by the emerging troupe, which is fond of nonlinear, obtuse narratives and likes to perform in unlikely found spaces. "In America we are always trying to determine who's better," says Thomas Riccio, co-founder of DWZ and the director and lead writer of their shows. "We do it on television with reality shows, and you see it every year during football season. In *Bull Game*, we'll have elements of both of those American rituals."

In the show, characters Ton and Fuva control the game, serving as commentators and manipulators. The athletes compete in various challenges with encouragement from cheerleaders, while the audience watches from the sidelines as fans. Every evening,

one audience member is selected to train and compete against the game's reigning champion, Bruno the Bull.

As with most *Zombies* shows, Riccio has written the bulk of *Bull Game*, but the final product is a devised work, with contributions from the actors and designers. Indulging the city's obsession with professional athletes and the storied Cowboys cheerleaders, *Bull Game* promises to be one of the troupe's most intrinsically "Dallas" shows yet. As with much of DWZ's work, the immersive aspect forces audiences to examine their own value systems.

"In this country, we have mythical American values we're not even aware of," Riccio ventures. "DWZ shows put you in the thick of it. When a gun is fired, you can't ignore it, because it happened just a few feet away from you." —Lauren Smart